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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 011817

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/16/2014

TAGS: SNAR PREL PINR CO PGOV

SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER DENIES CONJUGAL VISIT WITH INCARCERATED DRUG TRAFFICKER

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On November 16, Defense Minister Jorge Uribe requested a meeting with the Ambassador to explain an article in El Nuevo Herald that claimed he had made a conjugal visit to a woman imprisoned in Medellin. The woman, Dora Adriana Alzate Restrepo, was arrested and sentenced to nine years in jail when authorities found heroin in her suitcase bound for Miami in the Medellin airport in February 2003. Uribe told the Ambassador that he had had a ten-year, personal relationship with Alzate, whom he met while he was president of Delima Marsh and she worked for an associate company. On the day of her arrest, Uribe and Alzate were traveling separately to the U.S. from Medellin and were chatting in the airport. Alzate was detained by security and Uribe boarded the plane unaware of her fate. After her arrest, Uribe said that he visited her in prison once and spoke with her on the telephone once. He emphasized he had no prior knowledge of her drug trafficking activities and has not had any contact with her since becoming Minister. Uribe subsequently called the Ambassador back to tell him that he had talked to President Uribe, who had given him full support.

¶2. (C) Uribe said that he wanted to present the facts directly to the Ambassador so there would be no questions between them. The MOD is one of our strongest allies in combating drug trafficking. The Ambassador told Uribe that his private life was none of the Embassy's business, that his record on drugs, as far as the U.S. was concerned, was perfect, and that the Embassy continued to have the highest confidence in him.

WOOD